105 formerly they practiced empollamiento
[846] /5 cont./ ["breeding, hatching"]
[771] (couvade); they have a purely exorcistic, animistic system,
[325] and not a sacerdotal or theistic one; they make metal objects;
[505] they travel in canoes..., they grow and spin cotton and make
[248] complicated weavings with this fiber...; they press yucca with
[283] a basketwork press of characteristic design; they make numerous
[286] objects of a typical and fine basketwork."
[285]

Chapter II

The Land Where the Pemón Indians Live

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10. The general area. 11. The main nucleus of the Gran Sabana. 12. Its location. 13. Climate. 14. Area. 15. Orography. 16. Hydrography. 17. The name Gran Sabana. 18. The name Alto /Upper/ Caroní. 19. The name Serranía de Guayana /Guiana Ridge/. 20. The wealth of this region. 21. The beauties of the same. 22. Caroní and Roroima. 23. Means of communication.

131 10. The tribes of the Pemón language live in the most
101 central part of Guiana in the region of Venezuela, which, /6/ orographically we may call Roroima Mountain (N., S., and W. of same) and hydrographically, Caroní River.

I believe it necessary to repeat that the borders of Indians, like those of birds, are not those designated by international treaties; and thus the Pemón Indians go beyond the borders of Venezuela and also extend into the Brazilian campos of the Branco River and into the forests of British Guiana.

11. There are a group of Pemón who live in Kamarata and Urimán (savannas); a few less live in the forests of the Tiriká, the Caroní, and the Paragua; but the main nucleus of this tribe is located on the Gran Sabana, hence we must

131 /6 cont./
101 conclude that these Indians are by preference dwellers on the savannas and not forest dwellers.

114 I copy, because they are absolutely in conformity with my
361 observations, Dr. Simpson's words: "An Indian requires three things for his home: (1) an open space, a savanna of greater or lesser area, for his dwelling; (2) a perpetual stream of water, sufficiently wide and deep so that he can swim and fish or, at least, which will provide a supply of water all year; (8) a forest on the edge of which he can grow crops and have wood available and, secondarily, where he can hunt."

131 12. The Gran Sabana is located "between the parallels 4° 34' and 6° 45' north longitude /sic/ and the meridians 60° 34' and 62° 50' west of Greenwich." The Gran Sabana is thus located in the most southeastern corner of Bolivar State and of Venezuela, in that part where Venezuela touches Brazil and British Guiana.

133 The Gran Sabana is shaped like an immense open fan, the ribs of which would be the several rivers that form the Caroní, which is the central rib or vein of this entire great river valley or hydrographic basin.

132 13. In general, the climate of the Gran Sabana, despite
133 its proximity to the tropic is temperate; this is due to the altitude above sea level and the high mountains which surround it.

131 14. The area of the Gran Sabana is approximately 35,000 square kilometers.

133 15. The principal mountain ranges, which surround this almost virgin district and which give it an aspect of majesty and grandiosity beyond imagination, are: Roroima, Iru-tepui, Putari-t, Lema (Ilotoyeukurú, Tukui-ouki-yén, Morochipán), Aparamán, Auyán, Aprada, Apakará, Chimaté, Tirepón, Churí, Akopán, Uekpuimá, Katurán, and Uei-tepui. Of lesser importance are Apaurai, Prai-tepui, Arumá-tepui, Sororopán, Pavi-tepui, Uona-tepui, and others.

[1.1]

INTRODUCTION

Orientation

101 At about the time of its discovery by Columbus, the great and varied territory that is now united under the Venezuelan flag was occupied by a large number of highly diverse tribes of Indians. Most of these belonged to two major stocks, or linguistic and cultural divisions, those of the Caribs and Arawaks. Each of these major groups is now known to have arisen from a single origin (linguistically and culturally at least — each may have absorbed much blood originally alien to it), although each includes tribes so separated geographically or in other respects that they were not themselves aware of this basic unity. 101 Various Carib tribes, loosely or not at all federated, occupied almost all the 131 coastal region from near Valencia eastward to Cumaná, and other Caribs occupied the shores of Lake Maracaibo except at the northern end and most of the mountains west of the lake far into Colombia, for the Motilones belong to this group. The coast from near the Río Yaracuy, westward into Colombia, including the northern end of Lake Maracaibo and the site of the present city of Maracaibo, was occupied by Arawak tribes, and closely allied Indians covered a vast area inland including almost all of the western llanos. The Andes were occupied by an isolated group, the Timotes, neither Carib nor Arawak in affinity, and an equally isolated group, the Betoys, lived around the northern end of these mountains and northward to the interior of the present state of Falcón.

Elsewhere there were other similarly isolated groups, such as the Warraus (or Guaraus) around the Orinoco Delta region, the Yaruros, Wahibos (or Guahibos), and others on the middle and upper Orinoco, the Waikas (not to be confused with the Carib Akawais who have also been called Waikas, or Guaicas) at the headwaters of that river, and a few others. Notwithstanding the survival, even today, of several such isolated relict groups and of a few almost equally isolated Arawak tribes, almost all of the wild and enormous

territory that is now Venezuelan Guayana was occupied by Indians of Carib stock, not greatly unlike those of the coastal region of Caracas or Cumaná.

In northern Venezuela, although Indian blood still visibly survives in many places, Indian culture and tribal organization are now almost completely absorbed into the modern Venezuelan culture, mainly of European origin. Some European influence has penetrated everywhere, even to the most remote tribes who have not yet seen white men, but in general the great mass of Carib tribes south of the Orinoco have resisted this advance, aided by the difficulty of access to their region. Many of them still retain their tribal organization and an almost purely aboriginal culture. Here pre-Columbian American civilization can still be studied, and particularly that of the Caribs, in most respects the most important aboriginal stock in Venezuela.

The importance of studying these Indians is very great and its urgency not less so. From the historical point of view, such studies show the indigenous basis of Venezuelan history and culture. From a social point of view an understanding of them may permit an easing of the inevitable process of Europeanization and a lessening of the unintentional brutality that usually accompanies it. Such a study may also prove that the survival of these Indian cultures is a definite economic resource. In any case, these Indians belong to Venezuela, even though they are barely aware of this fact, and knowledge of them by the other, the more civilized Venezuelans, is an obligation and can be a great pleasure. These studies are urgent, because the renascent Venezuela of recent years is advancing impetuously into the most remote fastnesses, and much that is most picturesque and most important in their Indian cultures is disappearing from year to year.

Most of the Indians of southeastern Venezuela, especially between the Caroní on the west and the borders of British Guiana and of Brazil on east and south, belong to a particular branch of Caribs that can best be called Arekuna. The Arekuna division of Caribs, which forms an important surviving nucleus of such Indians, is itself divisible into several quite closely allied by consciously separate tribes, including the Taurepanes near Roroima and the Kamarakotos around the equally great mountain Auyan-tapui. The latter Indians form the subject of this monograph.

From a broader point of view all the aboriginal cultures of Venezuela east and south of the Andes, with all those of British, Dutch and French Guiana and those of extreme northern Brazil, have many traits in common and can be considered as belonging to one culture area or subarea of South America. This is well called the Northeastern or the Guayana (or Guiana) Area, the latter because it centers around Venezuelan Guayana and is typically developed also in the other Guianas. This area in turn has some more general traits in common with others in South America east of the Andes in the north and of the Chaco and Uruguay in the south. This, the so-called Amazon Area, is thus a major

101 132 182 particular region is that some tribes habitually live in forests while others habitually live in sabanas, grassy plains amid the forests. This distinction may accompany or induce definite cultural differences even between tribes that are 131 closely allied racially and linguistically. The Kamarakotos, like the Taure- 133 panes, are sabana Indians.[1] They live in sabanas in the midst of surrounding forests, in a series of valley bottoms about 400 to 500 meters in elevation. They always live near but practically never in the forests and strongly prefer relatively flat valley bottoms, seldom penetrating into the mountains even temporarily. Until taken up by white explorers there is no memory or legend of any of them ever climbing Auyán-tepúi or any of the other real mountains 132 around their valleys. In these valleys frost is, of course, quite unknown and the days are always warm enough for clothes to be unnecessary for warmth but are seldom disagreeably hot. The nights are usually chilly and make sleeping indoors preferable. There is little seasonal variation of temperature, but there [22] are the usual well-defined rainy and dry seasons of the tropics. As in most of Venezuela, the rainy season is "winter," when there is little activity in travel, hunting, or agriculture, and the dry season is the active time.

121 178 [178] Recently subject, like all the Indians, to growing Venezuelan[2] influence, the Kamarakotos yet retain practically all the pre-Columbian culture of this area in readily recognizable and relatively unmodified form. This makes them an almost ideal group for study from this point of view and it also makes their study of much greater value than might appear from the small size of this one tribe. As a type study it is a concrete, unified, but broadly characteristic example of the sort of culture that once prevailed over most of Venezuela and that still prevails over an enormous area of that country. Such "civilized," "Venezuelan," or "European" influence as does appear in this tribe adds to, rather than subtracting from, its importance and interest. This influence lends itself to clear analysis and it also typifies a widespread process and one of the greatest social and economic importance.

114 Studies of this sort have been relatively so rare in Venezuela that an observer can be sure that almost anything he observes is important and worth publishing as long as it is accurately reported and intelligently interpreted. There has, it is true, been a long series of reports on Venezuelan Indians and certainly no depreciation of these studies is intended. Some of the early colonists and missionaries left very valuable accounts, irreplaceable because of their first-hand records of things now vanished. It goes without saying, however, that these were not unprejudiced or skilled observers and that their information was not gathered in a scientific way or integrated with anthropology in general, a science that hardly existed at that time. Other and ethnologically more accurate and sophisticated travelers, like Humboldt and Schomburgk, have since added many more and, on the whole, better data of the same sort. It is necessary to mention only the names of Cordero, Salas, Ernst, Tavera-

1 2 [see footnotes on p. 305, category 116 - Analyst]

114 Williams' fine grammar and vocabulary of the Makuchi language is particularly valuable among studies in British Guiana. Perhaps the work of Farabee should also be mentioned as a source for comparative material, but it has been severely criticized on many points and contains virtually nothing beyond a series of physical measurements that is not obtainable in more detailed and more accurate form from other students.

101 Such, then, is the general racial, linguistic, and cultural picture into
121 which the Kamarakotos fit and such are the main outlines of anthropological studies with which this monograph is to be integrated.

Historical Notes

175 The Kamarakotos appear in written records at a relatively late date.
131 Search of maps purporting to cover the area where they live, from de Bry's map of 1599 down to those of the present time, has not revealed the name of the tribe on any map earlier than 1840, when it appeared on Codazzi's "Carta del Cantón de Upata." Since that date the word Kamarakoto, spelled in several different ways, has appeared on most maps including tribal names in this region. The exact positions given to the name on various maps differ by as much as five hundred kilometers, but it would be profitless to go into this point in detail. The changes in position all appear to be accidental or based on poor evidence and they certainly do not reflect any known migration of the tribe or exact knowledge of its location at any given time.

175 Probably the earliest record of Indians called Kamarakotos, although it has only recently been published, is that of Fray Ramón Bueno, a Franciscan missionary who was stationed with the Orinoco missions from 1785 to 1804 and who left a manuscript description of Guayana written between 1800 and 1804 and published in Caracas in 1933. This curious and valuable work includes the following passage (p. 85 of the printed edition):

"Los Camaracotos, Guayanos y Guaicas, son naciones mezcladas; los primeros y últimos se fugitivan continuamente a los montes y los Guayanos, siendo, los más, criollos, vuelven a los montes a sacarlos. De estas naciones tienen algunos pueblos los RR. PP. Capuchinos Catalanes del Bajo Orinoco y sin embargo de la sujeción con que los tienan, les dan bastante en que pensar: los hacen andar vestidos, a ellos con calzón y camisa y a ellas con fustan terciado; teniendo para el efecto un hato de común cada pueblo, cuyo producido invierten en esto y gastos de entradas a los montes, verificando cada ano una."

175 This information, interesting as it is, is extremely vague and it is by no
101 means certain that the Camaracotos of this account are really the forerunners of the Kamarakotos studied in the present paper. The passage gives no exact

175 information on the location of the "Camaracotos" of that time, but the infer-
101 ence from their association with the Akawais and reduction by the Catalán Capuchins is that they lived a long distance, probably to the northeast, from the present home of the Kamarakotos. The "Guaicas" of this account were doubtless Akawais.[5] There is, as I shall mention below, some slight evidence that the Kamarakotos did come from the northeast in post-discovery times, but certainly if they were really reduced to mission towns and forced into clothes around 1800, both the memory and the effects of this reduction had been completely lost a century later. Moreover, their present linguistic, physical, and cultural affinities are very definitely with tribes that now live east and south of them, into British Guiana and Brazil, and for whom movement from the north is improbable. It is improbable that our Kamarakotos are as nearly related to the Akawais, with which Fray Ramón Bueno's account associates them, as they are to the Makuchis and certainly the relationship is far less close than with the Taurepanes. With all of this, it is doubtful whether the account really refers to the ancestors of the present day Kamarakotos. It might refer rather to some other northern branch of the Arekunas, who are not mentioned under that name, than specifically to the particular tribal unit to which the name has now been limited or been transferred. The appearance of the name is certainly interesting, but not clearly significant. The other information given has no real ethnographic interest in any case, an unfortunate circumstance, since some of the remarks on other tribes in the same work are of the greatest ethnographic value.

114 Search of many works of travel has not revealed to me any first-hand ac-
101 count of the Kamarakotos between 1804 (if that account is first-hand and does refer to them) and 1938. No one previous to 1938 appears to have given a circumstantial account of a visit to them and reliable information was limited to the bare name and the fact that they lived somewhere on or near the Caroní.
●[131] The maps do give some reason to believe that by 1850, more or less, they lived in the same general region now occupied, whether or not they lived there before that time. The indefatigable student Koch-Grünberg added that they are Arekunas and gave three words of their dialect, but he also gave a few other hearsay details that were not correct and so did little to make them truly known.[6]

As far as the scientific world is concerned, the actual discovery or rediscovery of the Kamarakotos should perhaps be dated only from the Phelps-American Museum expedition of 1938, since the members of this party were the first definitely to place on permanent record any notice of first-hand contact with the tribe. This was done by Tate (1938), along with some photographs of these Indians, whom he called simply "Arecunas." His brief popular note gave no data of particular anthropological value but did finally put the tribe definitely on record. This expedition had as its antecedents the discovery of Auyán-tepúi (and of the Kamarakotos as well) by James Angel a few years

5, 6 [see footnotes on p. 306, category 116 – Analyst]

173 Any interpretation of this legend must be labeled conjecture and hardly
101 even scientific inference, let alone fact. Nevertheless, it could mean more
[131] or less this: That there was a tribe called Kamarakoto living somewhere north of the Cuyuní and east of the Caroní in colonial times; that some members of this tribe fled before the attacks of other Indians (cf. Ramón Bueno) or from the missionaries and other white invaders (the present Kamarakoto belief; the dislike of the Indians for the missionaries can also be read between the lines of Ramón Bueno) and settled down in or near Kamarata; that they were there absorbed into an Arekuna population already present or one that drifted in from the east, and that the resultant mixed tribe eventually became wholly Arekuna
[144] in speech, culture and physique. A weak point is that the "ancient Kamarakotos" must themselves have been physically identical with the Arekunas, because the Kamarakotos are so today and would hardly be if they were mixed with another tribe of different physical character.

173 More recent events are usually treated with equal vagueness. The most
192 definite is the memory of a great tribal war, more than two generations ago, between the Kamarakotos and surrounding tribes, particularly the Mwerwan, a tribe said to have lived on the Caroní and now to be extinct. A dispute over fishing rights between normally friendly tribes led to a general and bloody war. There has been no warfare within the last two generations.

173 The cacique, Alejo Calcaño, told me that a "bishop" (i.e. a priest or
797 missionary of some sort) visited this region some thirty years ago, in Alejo's life-time, distributed presents, but did not preach or teach, and forthwith disappeared never to be seen again. I have not been able to find any record of such a visit. Other Indians mention brief visits of missionaries (the same, or others?) which they place at anything from a generation to five years ago. The recently established missions of the Alto Caroní have not yet come in contact with the Kamarakotos.

Basis of This Study

101 The materials for the present study were gathered during several weeks'
114 residence in Kamarata, the valley south of Auyán-tepúi, early in 1939 with the Comisión Exploradora de la Gran Sabana of the Ministerio de Fomento of
122 the Venezuelan Government. I cannot too heartily thank all the officials concerned for their generosity and their splendid co-operation in making this work possible for me, and I wish particularly to mention the Minister of Fomento, Dr. Manuel Egaña, and my companions and the leaders of the expedition, members of the Servicio Técnico de Minería y Geología, Drs. Victor M.
114 Lopez, Santiago Aguerrevere, Carlos Delgado, and Carlos Freeman. Thanks to them and to the excellent equipment and organization of the expedition, I

133 the extreme lower course of the Aichá and part of the Akanán River around
103 the mouth of the Aichá, which is tributary to the Akanán. The third area is the lower valley of the Akanán, east of Auyán-tepúi, between Akanamuintá and the confluence of the Akanán with the Karao, and the fourth is formed by sabanas bordering the Karao near this confluence, northeast of Auyán-tepúi.

131 As the name implies, Kamarata ("the place Kamara") is traditionally
361 the home of the Kamarakotos ("the people of Kamara"). At present Uruyén,
[103 which is approximately in the middle of Kamarata, is the most western inhabited place in that valley. The upper, western end of the valley, at least
[169 as suitable for habitation, is now completely uninhabited. The Indians say that it was densely inhabited until recently and this is obviously true since
[76 abandoned farm patches can be seen there and traces of houses.[97] Many of the people are said to have died from fever or spirit-possession and the rest moved away. Now there are only four inhabited places considered as in Kamarata (one of which, Aleuiba, alewi:ba, is outside the valley proper), and the center of population is in the lower Akanán valley, where approximately half of this "central group" of Kamarakotos live.

131 The inhabited area and the tribe itself are well-defined to the north and
137 to the east. No Kamarakotos live north of the Karao valley where there begins an enormous stretch of forest virtually unbroken by sabanas and therefore uninhabitable to these Indians. To the east no one lives more than half a day's travel east of the Akanán, where another lesser stretch of forest separates this region from the northern part of the Gran Sabana.

101 To the west and southwest, however, the boundaries of the tribe are ex-
619 tremely vague. Kamarata is here well-defined by mountains and forests, but
[131 at no great distance beyond these in the valleys of the Caroni and its tributaries
139 there are sabanas which are inhabited by Indians indistinguishable from the Kamarakotos. The Indians themselves do not know how many of these people there are and are quite undecided as to whether they should be called Kamarakotos or not. Unlike what may be called the central group, in the Aichá, Akanán and Karao valleys, these Indians are not in constant touch with each other or with the nuclear group, and the authority over them claimed by the cacique is purely nominal as he does not really know who most of them are or
[184 where they live. In general they are thus more isolated and are less affected by the so-called civilizing influences centering within the nuclear group. They do frequently visit Kamarata to trade, visit, dance, and drink and are treated not quite as members of the family but still not as foreigners or outsiders. Their speech does not differ perceptibly from that of the central group. Some of them call themselves Kamarakotos, but generally they are called Arekumas by the central Kamarakotos. Except for the more attenuated influence on them of the recent expeditions, their culture is identical with that of the central
114 group. I have seen enough of them to verify these statements, but the present
101

97 [see footnote on p. 318, category 116 - Analyst]

[p. 214]

SOCIAL CULTURE

Organization

648 The country of the Kamarakotos is in the State of Bolívar, District Piar,
[131] of which the capital is Upata. No one disputes these attributions or the territorial and civil authority of the corresponding Venezuelan officials, the Indians themselves being agreeably submissive to Venezuelan authority as far as they
648 are aware of it. In fact, however, no effort has ever been made to extend
643 Venezuelan law or customs to them, no governmental agency is regularly in contact with them, and there are no local officials beyond the fact that Alejo
[178] Calcaño's de facto authority in the tribe is officially recognized. Since he was regularly made tribal chief, or cacique, by the Indians themselves, this flavor of legality does not alter the fact that the Indian tribal organization, such as it is, is intact and that they are still living in a state of virtually complete independence with no reference to any laws or customs but their own.

571 The social organization among most of the Indians of this broad region
171 is very loose, with few formal offices or ceremonies. The Caribs in general
178 seem seldom to have had any very elaborate or rigid form of government and the great simplicity of the society of those of this region may be correlated with their living in small, rather isolated family groups and with the lack of necessity, in recent years, for uniting and organizing for any important co-operative undertaking, such as war.

592 The social unit is the family group, consisting of all the persons living
621 at one place. This may include more than one married man with his family and if so the two or more natural families that fall into the single Kamarakoto social family unit are frequently but not necessarily related. For instance, at Uruyén there are two adult males with families, one of whom is married to the sister of the other. They live in different houses but constitute, in the Kamarakoto sense, a single family group. Quite unrelated persons may, with

197 95. The similarity is perhaps somewhat exaggerated by the fact that
648 our detailed knowledge of Taurepán is from Koch-Grünberg whose Taurepán is that of extreme southern, marginal members of the tribe, where they are in intimate contact and even mixed with Makuchis.

131 96. The fact that previous maps include too large an area in Kamarata
114 has been mentioned on an earlier page. Cardona's map (1938) shows "Camarata" as if it were a village or house and locates it outside of what is really Kamarata.

114 97. Several careful observers, speaking of places inhabited by other
161 Carib tribes, have drawn attention to the fallacy of other less careful travelers
166 who have assumed that the existence of abandoned houses is, in itself, an indication of declining population. This correction is, of course, valid since houses are frequently abandoned for reasons that have no relation to racial decline. At Uruyén, for instance, there are two abandoned buildings still standing and there are traces of several others, but there is no evidence that the population of this place (adding in the new places occupied by people who once lived here) has recently declined. But in the case of the upper Kamarata valley there is a whole area of considerable extent which was formerly well occupied and is now wholly deserted. The inhabitants might simply have moved away and doubtless some of them did, but given the desirability of the site it is unlikely that all would do so without special reason and we have the Indians' evidence that most of them died and the rest left on that account.

114 98. These statements show how misleading (even though not absolutely
101 incorrect) was Koch-Grünberg's conclusion, based on hearsay evidence, that the Kamarakotos are the Arekunas of the Caroní. The statement by Kieckers (see Linguistic References), the authority for which I do not know, that the Kamarakoto dialect dominates especially on the Paragua is entirely incorrect. In
103 passing it may be added that the generally accepted spelling "Paragua" for the name of this river is an example of false assimilation or poor colloquial phonetics. It has nothing to do with the Spanish word "agua" but comes from the Carib paraba, parava, or parawa.

581 99. The Lorenzos and the Jose Rangels are different men of the same name.

125 100. This way of estimating the population from the number counted by
162 the Indians as men is based on knowledge of the exact numbers of men, women, and children in many families and must be reasonably accurate. At Uruyén, for instance, a typical inhabited place, there are 13 residents of whom 4 are counted as men.

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/183 cont./

At the other end of the island of Maraca the territory of the Taurepan (Pemón) begins, and it is interesting to note that about the year 1911 the Casapare, under the command of one captain Kuranaí, had established peaceful contacts with the neighboring Caribe for the purpose of acquiring by barter European utensils, which they valued very highly. The custom of cultivating small plantings, which were noted by Schomburgk, Koch-Grünberg, and Gheerbrandt (1955, p. 345), must also be of Caribe origin.

Koch-Grünberg (1928, pp. 302-308) was able to publish the first vocabulary of a Yanoama language, and, as the same author points out, some words of Caribe origin can be distinguished in this idiom of the Uraricapará River, /184/ but almost all of them refer to utensils and cultivated plants of Caribe or European origin.

The other group (Waica?) was visited by Koch-Grünberg four weeks after his first encounter with Yanoama people, with whom he lived in a rancheria on the Motomotó across from the Sierra Marutani. This group had relations with the Makú of the Auarí River, from whom they adopted certain cultural elements, such as agriculture. We do not have a vocabulary from this group, but, according to information given to Koch-Grünberg by his native companions, they speak the same Yanoama idiom with slight dialectal differences.

The expansion of the Casapare toward the north is of recent date, since their sworn enemies, the inhabitants of the Paragua, as well as the Pemón to the northeast, ceased their reprisals and allowed the unhindered advance of the Yanoama nomads. It seems that at the same time the Sanemá of the southwest and the Casapare began to invade the zone. At the present time, the Yanoama dominate as far as the Marí River, a left tributary of the Paragua (5° 10'). The Pemón to the east of the Paragua have vacated the space between this river and the Caroní. Their nuclei are to be found on the Gran Sabana, in the southeastern part of Venezuela. Under the joint influence of civilization and the mission they have lost their characteristics as Caribe